

August 8, 2005

Afghanistan **Freedom** Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan **Watch**



Afghan National Army hones
skills at artillery range

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Photo courtesy Marine Corps



Marines from the 2nd Battalion, Third Maine Regiment take a break in combat operations near Orgun-E June 29.

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Afghan National Army soldiers load the D-30 Howitzer during a recent annual training exercise. The soldiers are part of the 4th Combat Support Kandak (Battalion), 3rd Brigade, 201st Corps.

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◀ **Page 10:** 1-508th conducts training with ANA



(Cover) Afghan National Army soldiers prepare to fire the D-30 Howitzer during a recent annual training exercise. The soldiers are part of the 4th Combat Support Kandak (Battalion), 3rd Brigade, of the ANA's 201st Corps.

Afghanistan Freedom Watch

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Photos by Army Sgt. 1st Class Stephen Lum

Army Sgt. Christopher R. Ocet, a 298th Engineer Detachment carpenter from Mililani, Hawaii, saws a sheet of plywood for a shower being assembled at a forward operating base in the Kandahar area of operation.

Engineers Build Infrastructure

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Stephen Lum
117th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – This April, after flying more than 12,000 miles, the 298th Engineer Detachment Soldiers were ready to hit the ground running. Only a week removed from Hawaii, 50 Soldiers started upgrading the Kandahar Airfield infrastructure. Carpenters, electricians, plumbers, masons, heavy equipment operators and mechanics worked on improving existing facilities, preparing the surfaces for expanding the motor pool and flight line and provided personnel for the base force protection mission.

The tropical engineers, part of Fort Lewis-based 864th Engineer Battalion's Task Force Pacemaker team, accomplished their assigned missions over the first two months of the deployment without their own tools and heavy equipment. This mission is continuing under the direction of Combined Task Force Bayonet, which is run by the 173rd Airborne Brigade based out of Vicenza, Italy.

"Our tools and equipment were in shipping containers," said Army Cpl. Howard H. Higa, a carpenter from Ewa Beach, Hawaii, and first line supervisor of the one of the building projects, "but we were still able to accomplish the missions on schedule."

Army Maj. Anthony Adams, executive officer from the 864th, said every project is important, but over crowding in some facilities made the completion of some projects more critical.

"The logistics were the biggest challenge," Army Staff Sgt. Gulstan K. Poepoe, a carpenter also from Ewa Beach. "Everything from ladders, tools and vehicles were scourge from Soldiers with their bags packed ready to redeploy or the base contract staff."

The logistics for construction was labor intensive; it included the physical movement and inventory of all the hardware and construction materials.

"The 173rd Support Battalion actively engaged the 298th Soldiers," said Army Sgt. Kirk K. Halemano, of Kalihi, Hawaii. "We rebuilt their entry way from an open stairway to a roofed porch with benches. Other home improvements included putting finishing touches on the conference room

and building work areas. We're kept busy, not waiting for our container to arrive; we're here to help rebuild Afghanistan."

Heavy equipment operators are already outside the wire, said Army Staff Sgt. Dzuong K. Le, a carpenter from Ewa Beach.

They're helping build the Tarin Kowt Road in outskirts of Kandahar City, Le said.

"Our latest project comes on the heels of the arrival of our containers of tools and heavy equipment," said Army Staff Sgt. Kenneth K. Kaania, a carpenter from Aiea, Hawaii, and project coordinator.

"We're now working on the infrastructure of the forward operating bases outside the wire, outside of Kandahar Airfield. We're prefabricated, as much as possible guard towers, latrines, showers and decks, which we'll load up and truck out to the FOBs and assemble. As with many our jobs, non-carpenter engineers cross-train during our prefabrication phase, but they'll get their opportunity to do their specialty when we add electrical and plumbing to the various structures."

Photos by Army Sgt. 1st Class Stephen Lum



Army Spc. Andrew P. Kalaukoa, Makaha, a 298th carpenter, aligns the framing in the 173rd Support Battalion conference room.



(Above) 298th Engineer Detachment Soldiers build a porch for the 173rd Support Battalion that includes a roof and benches.

(Above right) Army Spc. Jon M. Julius, a 298th Engineer Detachment carpenter from Kapolei, Hawaii, drills in a wall panel of a shower being built for a forward operating base in the Kandahar area of operation.



(Right) Army Spc. Corey A. Pabo, a 298th Engineer Detachment soldier from Kalihi, levels the frame of latrine to be installed at forward operating bases in the Kandahar area of operations.

FREEDOM WATCH EDITORIAL

Two years in the eyes of a military journalist

By Army Sgt. Douglas DeMaio
20th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – I arrived here August 14, 2003.

Like many service members' first deployment to a combat zone, I wasn't sure what to expect.

As a photojournalist for the Army, I knew that I would be putting my life in harm's way to tell the Soldier's story - to tell the world what is Afghanistan.

Nearly two years later, on my second deployment in as many years to this country, I can tell you that all our efforts and sacrifices have been worthwhile.

Yes, our fallen comrades have made the ultimate sacrifice and our families have suffered and sacrificed dearly in our absence.

Yet our sacrifices have had many tangible results.

Let me give it to you from my perspective.

In two years, I have seen government ministries standup and reach the point of operating effectively, improving the infrastructure and capacity building of the Afghan government.

Through working with provincial and district leaders, ministries like the Afghan Ministry of Health and the Afghan Ministry of Interior have improved the lives of the average Afghan.

Roads are being built, which are providing economic growth. Health care professionals are being trained and providing better

resources to treat Afghans with health problems.

The security situation in Afghanistan is improving on a daily basis and the government in place is stable.

I've seen the Afghan National Army grow from only 3,000 soldiers to more than 25,000 soldiers.

The ANA and the Afghan National Police are replacing the security presence of the Coalition and expanding security to many of the most remote areas of Afghanistan. They are denying enemies of this Islamic republic sanctuary.

Afghanistan is quickly growing into an independent, self-sustaining country.

With national assembly elections just weeks away, Afghanistan is nearing its first chapter - moving beyond just its introduction.

Afghanistan is a key ally against the war on terrorism, and will continue to eliminate extremist movements that try to destabilize security throughout the world.

This unfinished story known as Afghanistan is effecting the world and the results have defeated and demoralized any would-be enemy.

A result of this can be seen by the Taliban recruiting children to continue their lost cause.

In these past two years, I have seen enormous progress and feel everyone's contribution is making a difference. I fully believe that this history - that you and I are a part of - will be felt throughout all civilization.

Enduring Voices

What lasting effect will this deployment have on your life?



Army Pfc. Ginger Owens
Task Force Strength,
249th General Hospital
"After seeing the way the local nationals live here, I will always be more appreciative of how good our way of life is in the U.S."



Army Staff Sgt. Robert Martinez
1st Bn., 114th Field
Artillery
"It strengthened me as a man: it made me realize we're richer than we actually put ourselves to be. You don't know what nothing is until you come to a place like this."



Air Force Senior Airman Monica Ancitl
CJTF-76, CJ6
"I've learned not to take things for granted."



Air Force Senior Airman Michael Abernathy
455th Expeditionary
Aircraft Maintenance
Squadron
"You learn to appreciate and respect the freedom you have in the states."

Dutch special forces assist village in bomb disposal

By Dutch Capt. Eric
1st Netherlands Special Forces Task Unit

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – The explosion was even louder than anticipated. As the ground trembled, a cloud of smoke and dust rose from the deserted area about 1 kilometer north of here.

In any other situation, the detonation would have spread fear among the local Afghans, but this time the explosion was welcomed with cheers, applause and a satisfied and happy look on the faces of the elders as they thanked the Dutch forces for clearing the unexploded ordnance. The explosion was the result of the detonation of a 1,000 pound airplane bomb by Dutch explosive ordinance disposal team members belonging to 1st Netherlands Special Forces Task Unit.

After having participated in Operation Enduring Freedom with air and naval assets, the Dutch government decided recently to commit special forces to Operation Enduring Freedom for a period of one year, in which a safe and secure environment will be created in Southern Afghanistan that will ultimately allow NATO to take over. Besides participating in Enduring Freedom, the Dutch also operate as part of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.

Since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, no Coalition partner has maintained a longer presence in Kandahar Province. Since their deployment, the Dutch troops have worked to build a stable and durable relationship with the people of Afghanistan.

The main focus lies on the upcoming elections in September. So far, the encounters with Afghan citizens have been very positive. Instead of resistance, the Dutch soldiers have been met with a warm welcome.

As the Dutch conducted their patrols, the chief civil military operations officer of the Dutch taskforce, Capt. Erik met with the provincial reconstruction team in Kandahar and representatives of a number of international and non-govern-

mental organizations to discuss projects.

In the past, organizations were hesitant to enter the area, and the Afghans did not have the means to carry out their own projects. Now, the security conditions in the area are such that, knowing that the Dutch are in the area, organizations are prepared to go into the area and start working.

When you ask the locals what they need most, they say they need water, said Erik.

"During a shura, in which Coalition forces and (other) organizations were present, it was decided that one of the ways to solve the water problem is by building nawars," he said.

Nawars are water basins that can hold thousands of litres of water.

In previous years, water wells were built by a non-governmental agency, but most of them are not working any longer. Nawars are simple and inexpensive to build, easy to maintain and are long-lasting. On July 18, the NGO SADA started the construction and rehabilitation of the first nawars in the Dutch area.

But it's not just water that keeps the Dutch busy. During their patrols, the Dutch passed a village where locals confronted them with the UXO - the 1,000 pound airplane bomb. The UXO was said to have been there for two or three years and the villagers were afraid that it would someday explode and destroy their village or kill their loved ones.

The village elder asked if the Dutch could clear the bomb, a request that was granted immediately.

"We needed to move the bomb from its current position to another area that allowed us to detonate it without causing damage," said Capt. Gerard, a member of the EOD team. "If we had left the bomb where it was, the blast would have



(Above) Soldiers of 1st Netherlands Special Forces task unit and local Afghans carefully place the bomb in its final position.
(Below) Klus geklaard (Job done).

destroyed the entire village."

The Dutch EOD component made an

assessment and disabled the UXO by removing the detonator. All that was left to do was the actual destruction of the bomb.

Next to patrolling and gathering information, the current focus of the Dutch operations is to help the people in their area of responsibility. Winning the support of the local population is crucial. This will ultimately show the Afghan people that the Dutch are not here to create problems, but to assist them as part of our support to the Afghan authorities, said Maj. Martijn, the commander of 1st NLD SF TU.

"It's not about winning the war, it's about winning the peace," said Erik. "Involving the local population in the execution of projects will ensure that they gain understanding that they themselves can contribute to the improvement of their living conditions, rather than to sit back and let others do the dirty work. This is why we asked the village elder to arrange transportation of the bomb from its current position to the detonation site."

From there, the Dutch EOD took over and destroyed the bomb. Although the contribution may seem small, the effect in terms of trust and support is huge.

Editors Note: Due to the sensitive nature of the 1st Netherlands special forces task unit, names and some information were withheld from this story.



Photos courtesy Netherlands Special Forces Task Unit

Afghan officers learn comprehensive operations

By Air Force 1st Lt. Leslie Brown
Office of Security Cooperation - Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan – Military operators and planners from the Afghan National Army's National Military Command Center have graduated from a comprehensive training course in how to operate a national army.

The 78 officers, who will act as the eyes and ears of the Afghan Army, received more than 220 hours of instruction. They were provided the tools and techniques to operate in the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war throughout the full spectrum of military operations.

"We need to have experienced and trained officers if we want to have a strong army," Afghan Ministry of Defense said Lt. Gen. Sher Karimi, chief of operations for the ANA's General Staff.

The mission of the NMCC is to monitor the situation in and around Afghanistan and produce plans that address threats and challenges to the country's well-being. The NMCC is organized into two branches: current operations and future operations.

"They are learning the structure of the ANA and Coalition partners, capabilities and limitations of the army and air corps, operational graphics and terms, sustainment imperatives, the military decision making process (MDMP) and how to be a professional officer," explained Ollie Hunter, an MPRI contractor and mentor to the ANA.

"As Afghanistan sleeps at night, the NMCC is open for business," Hunter said. "They will write the operations orders that direct the ANA's units to take action when the need arises."

One of the main focus areas during the course was the MDMP, from receipt and analysis of an objective, to course-of-action development, comparison and approval, and finally, to orders production.

With a new understanding of the MDMP, the command center will now be able to bring together the planning and analysis skills of Intelligence and Security (G-2), Command and Control (G-3), Sustainability (G-4), and Communications (G-6), explained Hunter.

Before the training began, a course syllabus had to be developed. Senior leaders of the ANA's General Staff developed a 46-objective training plan with the assistance of civilian and military mentors from the Office of Security Cooperation-Afghanistan. ANA Brig. Gen. Naheem Noori, deputy for Operations, Readiness and Mobilization, and his directors of Operations and Contingency Planning, ANA Col. Said Malook and ANA Col. Mohammad Esrar, were the main contributors to the syllabus.

ANA Lt. Col. Mohammad Farid, current operations branch leader at the command center, also lent his experience to the planning phase. Farid is a 2004 graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

"Many of the classes are modeled after the CGSC profile," Hunter said. "Colonel Farid was clearly a standout student at CGSC. He is a superb teacher and mentor to his peers and he knows his stuff. I have not observed a more adept instructor."

In addition to learning the operational aspects of running their army, the officers also gained an appreciation for the important staff-support elements with which they will work. Afghan and Coalition instructors provided insight and training on how to develop strong relationships with those elements through a broad overview of medical planning, intelligence assessments, fire support, logistics, communications and public affairs.

The students also participated in exercise scenarios such as a simulated earthquake in Kunduz Province.

"We wanted to see how the ANA troops would respond to a natural disaster," Farid said. "They need to know how to handle a full spectrum of operations. We need the people of Afghanistan to know that the Army is not just for fighting wars. They are also here to help the people."

Several times during the course, senior ANA leaders visited the students to provide their insight and experience.

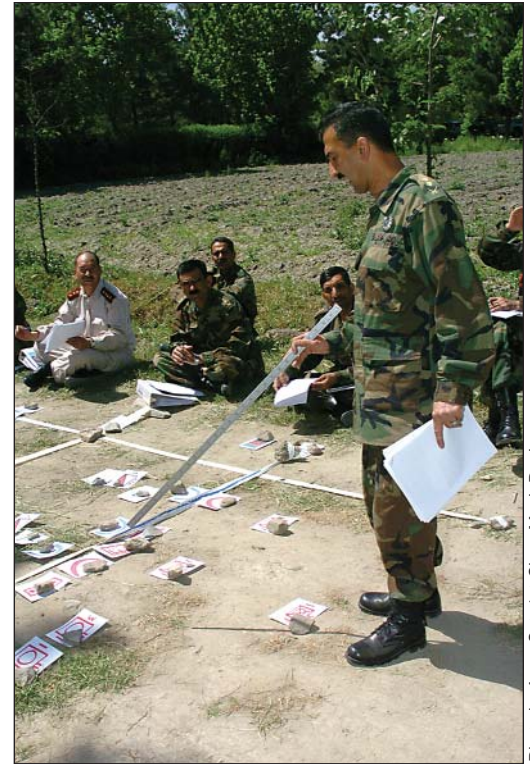


Photo by Army Sgt. 1st Class Mack Davis

Afghan National Army Lt. Col. Mohammad Farid, Current Operations Branch leader at the ANA's National Military Command Center, conducts a class on operational exercises using a terrain model to give his students hands-on experience for operational planning and execution.

"General Karimi's visit was a highlight of the course. He talked to the students about the role of the NMCC and the importance of contingency planning for a secure Afghanistan," Farid said.

An upcoming test for the NMCC will be the National Assembly elections scheduled for September. The NMCC will ensure the ANA is ready to respond if anything happens during this major milestone in Afghan history.

"In preparation for the national elections, we are drafting joint operations plans and orders with Coalition troops," Farid said.

"We are in constant communications with the ANA regional corps for situational awareness," Farid added. "We are testing all of our different communications abilities. We have many different means of communicating with our regions."

The graduation was an important step for the Afghan National Army and for the Afghan people. "The success of the ANA and future stability of Afghanistan depends on many factors and this training plays a significant role in the professionalism of our officers and ANA personnel," Farid said.



Photo by Army Sgt. Lynnette Jefferson

The D-30 Howitzer takes a crew of seven to fire and is a 3.5-ton weapon with a range of over 15,000 meters. Its rate of fire is seven to eight rounds per minute.

Afghan Army hones skills at artillery range

By Army Sgt. Lynnette Jefferson
Office of Security Cooperation - Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan – Afghan National Army soldiers recently conducted artillery live-fire training at the D-30 Howitzer range to improve their proficiency.

More than 120 Afghan soldiers conducted two months of training to prepare for the annual range time.

The D-30 Howitzer, which takes a crew of seven to fire, is a 3.5-ton weapon with a range of more than 15,000 meters. It can fire seven to eight rounds per minute.

ANA Capt. Mohammed Mohsin Hamdard, artillery commander for the 4th Combat Support Kandak (Battalion), 3rd Brigade, 201st Corps, said the range time gave his soldiers the opportunity to reinforce what they learned in school and strengthened their training.

"Today, the soldiers are doing exercises to increase their level of readiness. They are improving what they already know," he said. "We are soldiers and we need to learn more about our profession and we want to learn modern technology."

On the range were experienced ANA soldiers as well as soldiers who had not previously conducted live-fire training. ANA Pvt. Said Rahman said the training was important to him because it helps him serve his country.

"This is my first time firing. I have had a lot of training and classes to prepare for today," he said. "I am happy that I am able to put what I learned to use today. I feel great to get all this training."

Pvt. Rahimullah Yousa Zai, who also fired at this range last year, said the live-fire exercise puts all of the classroom work to use.

"It helps us a lot. We want to learn more and more," he said.

Conducting live-fire training is important for the ANA, said U.S. Army Maj. Curtis W. Faulk, the kandak's senior embedded training mentor.

"This is refresher training for the majority of the soldiers here today. For the past few months, they have practiced crew drills, weapons maintenance and safety. Today they will get the chance to practice firing," Faulk said. "In order to hone their skills and keep these skills intact, it's good for them to practice."

Faulk stressed the importance of maintaining the soldiers' professional skills. While live-fire training is normally conducted annually, "we like to shoot as often as we can," Faulk said. "In school, they give you the basics. The more they practice, the more professional they become."

U.S. Army Lt. Col. Arnie Marquart, senior mentor for the 3rd Brigade, said it is important to get the soldiers to the firing range. "They are getting hands-on experience in addition to what they learned in the classroom environment," he said. Marquart noted that when the ANA soldiers are not able to conduct live-fire crew drills, they still practice the drills.

Although the kandak's primary mission is artillery, its soldiers are also used in support of many different missions throughout Afghanistan, such as presidential details and security patrols.

"This kandak plays a large role in ensuring the stability and security of Afghanistan," said Marquart. "They are prepared to deploy to support their country at any time. This training gave them the opportunity to strengthen their skills."



(Above) An Afghan National Army soldier signals crew members to prepare the D-30 Howitzer for firing. The crew consists of seven members who are responsible for tasks such as gun tube alignment, preparation of ammunition, loading and firing a round.

(Right) Two Afghan National Army soldiers carry a round toward a D-30 Howitzer in preparation for loading.

(Below) Two Afghan National Army soldiers prepare to fire the D-30 Howitzer during a recent annual training exercise. The soldiers are part of the 4th Combat Support Kandak (Battalion), 3rd Brigade, of the ANA's 201st Corps.



Photos by Army Sgt. Lynnette Jefferson



Move out! 1-508th conducts movement training with ANA

By Army Pfc. Vincent Fusco
20 Public Affairs Detachment

FORWARD OPERATING BASE ANED, Afghanistan – A squad of green-clad soldiers moves through the dust and dry grass of the Afghan valley. All eyes are on the squad leader when he puts an open palm in the air. Without hesitation, the soldiers drop to a knee and pull outward security.

The U.S. sergeant at the head of the formation congratulates them and calls them closer to him. These Afghan National Army soldiers are moving on to the next part of their movement training.

Sgt. Christian A. Lawson, a fire team leader with 1st Platoon, A Company, 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment conducted training with ANA soldiers attached to his unit on movement through open, wooded and mountain areas July 26.

"They need to know how to move with us and how to teach their own soldiers these movements," said Lawson.

The Soldiers of 1st Plt. began doing movement drills with these soldiers shortly after doing similar drills with Afghan National Police in the Zerok and Naka regions of northern Paktika Province.

The ANA have picked up the training quite fast, even faster than the ANP, said Sgt. David Stewart, fire team leader with 1st Plt., who also conducts training with the ANA soldiers. This event was their second training session since being attached to 1st Plt.

"Soldiers are hands-on people," said Stewart. "You can tell when you come in that they have everything together."

The training emphasizes constant awareness of the surrounding situation, rather than improvisation, through constant practice. This session taught three hand-and-arm signals: stop, halt and file.

"The way we do things in the Army, anyone can pick this up and read about it," said Lawson. "But they need to practice now doing it before they know how."

Lawson and Stewart conducted classroom orientations for signals and formations, followed by guided drills in the field. Though eager to learn, the repetitive actions in the summer heat can be a test of morale for the ANA soldiers.

"We try to keep up their motivation by letting know they're doing a good job, and when they're doing the right or wrong thing," said Lawson. "You have to love teaching and helping them learn."

The instructors make sure that the ANA soldiers understand the lesson through the aid of linguists on site, and that the material does not overwhelm them.

"You have to crawl, walk and run with this stuff," said Lawson. "You have to take it slow before moving into combat speed."

"You feel a sense of reward watching their progress," said Stewart. "We're watching them move from chaos to order."

The training allows the ANA soldiers and their American counterparts to build a working relationship, get to know each



Practicing a halt, a fire team of Afghan National Army soldiers take up security positions during movement training outside Forward Operating Base Aned July 27.

other and build trust, said Stewart.

"They follow us on every mission," said Stewart. "Now things are getting better and better."

Lawson and Stewart have vehicle movement training scheduled on July 27 for the ANA soldiers, as well as regular follow-ups during their joint patrols through the area.

"The more we train, the more effective we become," said Stewart. "Their pride in their country is something they value highly."

Lawson and Stewart are hopeful that the ANA will keep practicing what they have learned after Coalition forces have left the area.

"I'd like to think they'll keep it up and take charge," said Stewart, "not just with courage, but with the will to drive on."



(Above) An ANA soldier keeps a watchful eye on a security halt during movement training outside Forward Operating Base Aned July 27.



(Left) An ANA fire team is in staggered positions and ready to move forward during movement training outside Forward Operating Base Aned July 27.

Photo by Army Sgt. Douglas DeMaio



Command Sgt. Maj. Iuniasolva Savusa and Maj. Gen. Jason K. Kamiya flank a group of new citizens of the U.S., after taking the Soldiers took the Oath of Allegiance in Bagram, July 28.

Non-citizen service members take oath for citizenship

By Army Spc. Tiffany Evans
20 Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - Twenty-five non-citizen service members serving in Afghanistan became U.S. citizens July 28, at naturalization ceremony held at the Enduring Freedom Chapel here.

"I put my paperwork in about four months ago, right before I deployed," said Army Pfc. Juan Aguilar, gunner, B Company, 2nd Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment. "Being that the paperwork went through so quickly, I'm excited to now be a citizen of the country I've been serving as a Soldier."

Aguilar who is from Bogotá, Columbia lives in Gastonia, N.C. He said that becoming a citizen happened sooner than he expected.

Due to the Military Citizenship Act of 2003, service members on active duty who serve during a period of military

hostilities are immediately eligible for naturalization.

Until President George Bush signed the National Defense Authorization Act in November 2004, overseas naturalization ceremonies weren't allowed.

"All of us are proud to take this Oath of Allegiance," said Army Spc. Gloria Sarbo, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 173rd Separates Battalion. "Most of us have been living in the U.S. for awhile, we all serve our country, and we consider ourselves Americans."

Sarbo who is originally from Leon, Nicaragua, now lives in Miami and says that this will now allow her to stay in the U.S. with her family.

"I'm excited that my friends and fellow service members have been allowed this chance to take the Oath of Allegiance while on deployment," said Army Sgt. Jesus-Marie Chaidez, motor sergeant, 22nd Personnel Service Battalion. "I already considered them my fellow Americans for taking that step and fighting alongside me."

6 enemy combatants killed, 10 captured in fighting near Shinkay

By Sgt. 1st Class Todd Oliver
CJTF-76 Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - Six enemy combatants were killed today and another was wounded after they attacked Afghan and U.S. forces near the city of Shinkay in Zabul province.

There were no Afghan or U.S. casualties.

Ten suspected enemy combatants were also captured as a result of the firefight. The wounded enemy combatant was transported to Kandahar Airfield for treatment. He is in stable condition.

Afghan and U.S. forces in the region were conducting

security and stability operations in the area at the time of the attack. In the last five days, Afghan and U.S. forces have killed approximately 20 enemy forces and detained 33 others in operations in Oruzgan and Zabul provinces.

"We would rather be directing more of our energies toward reconstruction and rebuilding efforts in Afghanistan, but when enemy forces attempt to stand in the way of progress here, we will have no other choice," said Army Lt. Col. Jerry O'Hara, a spokesperson for Combined Joint Task Force-76. "Afghan forces, working closely with U.S. forces, are doing everything they can to rid this country of their presence. The areas the enemies once considered safe havens are becoming smaller and smaller."

Several hundred Protest outside Bagram Airfield

BySgt. 1st Class Todd Oliver
CJTF-76 Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan – Several hundred Afghans gathered outside the gate of Bagram Airfield July 26 to protest an operation by Afghan and U.S. forces near the installation last night.

Afghan National Police were at the scene and U.S. military leaders from BAF are meet with local leaders to address the demonstrator's concerns.

A July 25 operation, which led to the capture of eight individuals suspected of planning and conducting attacks against U.S. and Afghan forces, was conducted against a single compound near the installation. U.S. forces attempted to contact local leaders to involve them in the operation but were unable to do so.

The detained individuals had improvised explosive device making materials in their possession at the time of their arrest and were thought to be planning attacks against Coalition forces.

Afghan National Police and Afghan intelligence services were involved in the operations, planning and execution.

There were no reports of injury or death as a result of the operation or protest.



Photo by Army Sgt. Matthew MacRoberts

Protesters threw rocks and burned tires July 26 outside the gate at Bagram Airfield to demonstrate against U.S. operations in the area.



PHOTOS FROM THE FIELD

A Soldier from the 3rd Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment tries to make his way to the end zone with the defense in pursuit during Task Force Storm's Safety Stand-down Day. Events include a task force run, awards, safety classes, a barbecue and a sporting event.

*Photo by Army Staff Sgt. Derrick L. Mims
D Company, 3rd Battalion 158th Aviation Regiment*

If you have high-quality photos of service members supporting the Coalition mission or enjoying well-deserved off-duty time, please e-mail them to freedomwatch@baf.afgn.army.mil. Please include full identification and caption information, including who is in the photo and what action is taking place.

Congressional delegation visits Sharana PRT

By Army Spc. Laura Griffin
117th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

SHARANA PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM, Afghanistan – House Representatives from Georgia, Guam, Kentucky and Texas came to visit the Sharana Provincial Reconstruction Team July 11, as part of a congressional delegation.

Representatives Lynn Westmoreland from Georgia, Madeleine Bordallo from Guam, Geoff Davis from Kentucky, and Mike Conaway and Kenny Marchant from Texas had spent the previous day touring Iraq and paid a visit to Kabul earlier in the day before coming to Sharana to finish their tour.

They were given a quick tour of the PRT and then ate while being briefed on operations in Paktika Province by Army Lt. Col. Timothy McGuire, 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment commander.

"Here, so close to the Pakistan border, our community projects help to counter terrorism by empowering the local government and people," McGuire told them. "One thing that is so important to making our overall mission successful is ensuring that the upcoming elections are safe and fair; that the people - all the people - can know that their vote will count."

"We're taking the fight to the border," said McGuire. "Keeping the enemy out of Afghanistan lets the people inside the bor-

der prosper. This is important here in the Paktika Province because of its isolation. There are many fence-sitters."

"But the best weapons system that I have is projects," said McGuire.

Evidence of the success of their projects in this region is best exemplified by the life-saving act of one small Afghan boy.

"We had a convoy coming here from Orgun-E about a week ago," said McGuire. "It's normal to see children running up to greet the passing convoys, but one boy was running faster than the others and trying to get our attention. I stopped the convoy and asked the boy what was the matter. He told us that there was an (Improvised Explosive Device) planted on the road ahead of us. We sent a team to check it out and there was in fact one there. I asked the boy why he told us about it. He said, 'I know that you are bringing schools to this area. Right now I sit under a tree for class, but soon I will have a school.'"

"This is every bit as important as World War II," he said. "This is our generation's call to arms, and we are fighting this battle now so that our children will not have to in the future."

When the briefing was finished, the representatives were led outside where they had a chance to talk to some of the Soldiers from the states they represent.

Representative Davis, a 1981 West Point graduate, had the chance to visit with a family friend stationed in Forward

Operating Base Orgun-E who had come to Sharana to see Davis.

Capt. Joe C. Geraci, Company A Commander, 1st Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, whose father knows Davis from volunteering at the West Point Society, was honored to be able to see Davis and personally tell him about his company's roll in the re-raising of an Afghan flag in the Bermel district.

"The district had been without any government presence for the past 15 months," said Geraci. "We went in with the Afghan National Army April 27 through June 2 and successfully restored the overthrown government there."

Davis was moved by the work going on here and echoed McGuire's sentiments about the historical significance of this war.

"This is a testament to the rule of law," said Davis. "We were able to drive the Taliban into political irrelevance; it's a revolutionary thing to see. Getting to come here and see this is one of the high points of my service."

"We are such a small part in the wash of history," he said. "We've got to make a difference while we have the opportunity."

When the visit was over, the representatives boarded a CH-47 Chinook with a better sense of the difference the Sharana PRT, and the other PRTs in Afghanistan are making to better the lives of the Afghans and ensure security for the upcoming elections.



Dari/Pashtu phrase of the week

Afghan cultural tidbit

Dari/Pashtu phrase of the week:

Where is the market?

Dari

Market Dar Koja ast?

(Mar-ket Dar ko-ja ast)

Pashtu

Market Chairta Dae?

(Mar-ket Char-ta Day)

Afghanistan has never been inhabited by only one ethnic group. The modern country's boundaries were determined by the interests of foreign powers, and on every side they cut arbitrarily through land traditionally occupied by one ethnic group or another. Its citizens naturally identify with those who speak their language and share their culture. Their loyalty is first to their local leaders and their tribe, and their identification with an abstract Afghan nation has always been fragile. In this sense, the country's multiethnicity has hampered its development as a nation.

(Source: <http://www.culturalorientation.net/afghan/aeco.html>)

Southern Afghan governors meet to discuss elections, security

By Sgt. 1st Class Todd Oliver
CJTF-76 Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - Governors from across southern Afghanistan met in Kandahar with Coalition leaders and a variety of aid and assistance agencies July 19 to discuss security for upcoming parliamentary elections.

The meeting was attended by governors from the Kandahar, Helmand, Oruzgan and Zabul provinces and focused mainly on election security, election preparation and governance as a whole.

"Each governor had the chance to discuss election threats and concerns in their provinces," said U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Jason Kamiya, commander of the Coalition's Combined Joint Task Force-

76. "We also discussed the status of voter registration and any other significant items of interest in their area."

Many of the governors blamed outside influences on the difficulties facing Afghanistan and noted that disruption of the upcoming parliamentary election was only a short-term goal of enemy forces operating in the country. Most felt that enemy forces in Afghanistan have a long-term strategy to wait out Coalition forces.

Kamiya made it clear when he addressed the group that safe, secure and fair elections were the top priority of U.S. forces and that the Coalition was committed to long-term peace in Afghanistan. He added that the responsibility for those priorities was shared by all.

The governors agreed to meet again in

one month to measure progress on the issues discussed. Kamiya reminded the governors that their progress was being monitored and the world was counting on their leadership to secure a safe and fair environment for the elections.

The meeting's format, believed to provide a free and open forum for the exchange of ideas and information by both Kamiya and the Afghan governors, will be tried in other areas across Afghanistan to help the nation enjoy a safe and secure election season.

In addition to the governors, attending were representatives from Coalition provisional reconstruction teams, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the Joint Electoral Management Body, and Coalition mentors assigned to the Afghan National Army.

1 killed, 1 injured during attack near Qalat

By Sgt. 1st Class Todd Oliver
CJTF-76 Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - One enemy combatant was killed, another wounded and two others escaped after attacking an Afghan and U.S. patrol with small arms and rocket propelled grenades near Qalat July 21.

No Afghan or U.S. forces were killed or wounded in the attack.

The wounded enemy combatant was medevaced to Kandahar and is currently in stable condition.

The attack occurred southwest of Qalat as the unit was conducting security patrols in that area.

The enemy combatants, who were on motorcycles, attacked the patrol but then quickly fled.

Coalition forces chased the individuals killing one and wounding the other but were unable to capture the remaining two.

A search is underway for the two other individuals who escaped.

"For those who refuse to take part in the Government of Afghanistan's reconciliation program and continue to resist being part of a peaceful future, face either being killed or captured," said Army Lt. Col. Jerry O'Hara, Combined Joint Task Force 76 spokesperson.

11 enemy combatants, 1 U.S., 1 ANA killed in fighting near Deh Rawod

BY Sgt. 1st Class Todd Oliver
CJTF-76 Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - Seven suspected enemy combatants have been captured in southern Afghanistan as Afghan and U.S. forces continue to search for the people responsible for an attack by 15 to 20 individuals yesterday.

The early-morning firefight northeast of Gereshk resulted in the death of a U.S. Soldier and the wounding of another. An Afghan interpreter employed by

the United States was also wounded. The injured were transported to Kandahar Airfield for treatment and released a short time later.

The initial attack occurred as Afghan and U.S. forces were patrolling along an unpaved road northeast of Gereshk.

Attack aircraft and helicopters responded to the site of the attack and bombed an enemy compound and positions north of Gereshk.

A battle assessment of injuries and damage has not yet been conducted.

Six U.S. military injured in IED strike

Combined Forces Command - Afghanistan

BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan - Six U.S. service members were wounded July 24 when a convoy they were traveling in was struck by an improvised explosive device northwest of Asadabad in Kunar Province.

The unit reported receiving small-arms fire immediately after the attack, and U.S. attack aircraft responded to the scene.

Artillery fire from a nearby base was directed against suspected enemy positions. Ground forces searched the area,

but it is unknown if any enemy forces were killed or wounded.

The injured were transported to Asadabad and Bagram Airfield in Parwan Province for treatment. All six were in stable condition.

"We are doing everything we can to ensure these wounded men receive the best medical care available," said Army Lt. Col. Jerry O'Hara, a spokesperson for Combined Joint Task Force-76.

"We are aggressively looking for the individuals responsible for this attack. Our thoughts are with the service members, and we pray for their speedy recovery."

Freedom Watch

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"Uncommon valor
was a common virtue"

Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz

Marine Capt. James Hunt, a forward air controller with the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit directs attack helicopters and aircraft against Taliban positions on a mountain near the village of Siah Chub Kalay. (Photo by Marine Gunnery Sgt. Keith A. Milks)